

CHERRY BREAD PUDDING

White chocolate and dried cherries give this old-fashioned favorite a new twist.

1 pound white chocolate, coarsely chopped
1 quart light cream or half-and-half
1/2 cup granulated sugar
6 eggs, slightly beaten
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1 (16-ounce) loaf day-old Italian bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
1 cup dried tart cherries
Whipped cream, if desired
Additional dried tart cherries, if desired

Melt white chocolate in large heavy saucepan over medium-low heat, stirring frequently.

Meanwhile, heat cream and sugar in saucepan, stirring occasionally, until sugar is dissolved and cream is hot, but not boiling. Pour cream mixture over melted chocolate. Cover and let stand 5 minutes. Stir mixture until well blended. Mix in eggs, vanilla and cinnamon.

Spray a 13x9x2-inch baking pan with non-stick spray. Place half of the bread cubes in pan. Cover with half of the cherries and half of the white chocolate mixture. Repeat layers. Press down gently on top bread cubes to make sure that they absorb some of the chocolate mixture. Cover pan with aluminum foil.

Bake in a preheated 350-degree oven 50 to 60 minutes, or until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Cool slightly before serving garnished with whipped cream and additional cherries, if desired.

Makes 12 servings.